

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 053188

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TO USMISSION GENEVA

S E C R E T STATE 053188

FOLLOWING STATE 053188 ACTION ANKARA 16TH MARCH.

QUOTE:

S E C R E T STATE 053188

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH OPIUM BAN: RUSH-ESENBEL CONVERSATION

REF: ANKARA 50970

SUMMARY: DEPSEC RUSH CALLED IN AMB ESENBEL MARCH 15. RUSH REEMPHASIZED THAT HIGH LEVELS OF THE USG, INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY, WERE DISTURBED OVER THE POSSIBILITY OF TURKEY RESUMING PRODUCTION OF OPIUM. SUCH AN EVENTUALITY WOULD HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON US-TURKISH RELATIONS IN ALL FIELDS. THE REACTION OF CONGRESS WOULD BE HIGHLY ADVERSE. RUSH POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. AND THE WORLD BANK WERE ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE IN ANY WAY THEY COULD TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN THE POPPY REGION. AMB ESENBEL REPEATED THE PRESENTATION HE MADE TO UNDER SECRETARY SISCO MARCH 13 (REPORTED IN REFTEL).

1. THE DEPSEC TOLD AMB ESENBEL THAT HE HAD CALLED HIM IN TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT TURKEY MIGHT RESCIND
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 053188

THE OPIUM BAN. HE SAID THAT HIGH LEVELS OF THE USG,

INCLUDING THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY, WERE VERY DISTURBED. A RECISION WOULD HAVE A SERIOUS EFFECT ON TURKISH-AMERICAN RELATIONS IN ALL FIELDS. THERE WOULD BE A SERIOUS ADVERSE CONGRESSIONAL REACTION. MR. RUSH SAID THAT THE U.S. WAS ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE AND ROBERT MCNAMARA, OF THE WORLD BANK, WAS ALSO ANXIOUS TO COOPERATE

IN IMPROVING THE EXISTING ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE POPPY REGION. HE SAID THAT U.S. WILL BE PLEASED TO DISCUSS WAYS IN WHICH IT COULD EITHER SPEED UP OR IMPROVE PROJECTS IN THE POPPY REGION.

2. AMB ESENBEL REFERRED TO HIS CONVERSATION WITH MR. SISCO ON MARCH 13. HE SAID THAT HE HAD RECENTLY BEEN IN TURKEY FOR CONSULTATION AND HAD WIDE RANGING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER, AGRICULTURAL MINISTER, NSP CHAIRMAN, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT. HE WANTED TO INDICATE TO THE DEPSEC THE DIRECTION OF THEIR THINKING. NO DECISIONS HAD YET BEEN MADE (ESENBEL REPEATED THIS FIVE MORE TIMES DURING THE CONVERSATION). THE POPULATION IN THE POPPY AREA WAS SUFFERING. THE GOVERNMENT FELT COMPELLED TO ACT AS THE 1971 ARRANGEMENT WAS NOT WORKING. THE ERIM GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN THE ORIGINAL DECISION TO IMPOSE THE BAN FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS. ANY NEW DECISION WILL TAKE FULL COGNIZANCE OF THESE SAME IMPERATIVES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GOT BELIEVED THAT TAKING HUMANITARIAN ACTIONS SHOULD NOT DAMAGE ITS OWN PEOPLE. THERE SHOULD BE A BALANCE.

3. IF THE GOVERNMENT FEELS THAT THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, ESENBEL CONTINUED, IT WILL HAVE TO RESUME PRODUCTION BECAUSE OTHERWISE PUBLIC OPINION WILL SAY THAT IT GAVE IN TO AMERICAN PRESSURE. THIS WILL BE BAD FOR THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT AND ALSO FOR THE U.S., WHOSE IMAGE WILL SUFFER IN TURKEY. THE GOT HOPES THAT IF THEY DECIDE THAT THEY MUST RESUME PRODUCTION THE U.S. WILL ACQUIESCE.

4. ESENBEL DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE GOT WANTED MORE MONEY. HE THOUGHT THE ISSUE WENT DEEPER THAN THAT. AS IT WAS
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 053188

DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT FEELS A HEAVIER RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PEOPLE THAN THE ERIM GOVERNMENT DID. ESENBEL ALSO RESTATED ECEVIT'S ASSURANCE THAT IF THE GOT DOES RESCIND THE BAN, POPPY CULTIVATION WILL BE ALLOWED ONLY UNDER STRICT CONTROL IN A RESTRICTED AREA. THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT WILL ACCEPT FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTING ANY ILLICIT DIVERSION. IT WILL WELCOME AMERICAN COOPERATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO

THIS END. IF SUCH COOPERATION IS NOT FORTHCOMING, HOWEVER, THE GOT WILL ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY ITSELF. ESENBEL SAID THAT IF PRODUCTION IS RESUMED, THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT-OWNED AND OPERATED PROCESSING PLANT (PRESUMABLY STRAW), WHICH WILL PROVIDE SEMI-FINISHED PRODUCTS. HE SAID THAT OPIUM WOULD THEN NOT BE PRODUCED FOR EXPORT. INSTEAD, THERE WOULD BE A

NEW MANUFACTURING FACILITY. THE FARMERS WOULD RECEIVE MORE MONEY FOR THEIR POPPIES AND CONTROL WOULD BE EASIER.

5. ESENBEL SAID HE WANTED TO BE FRANK ABOUT THE DIRECTION THAT HIS GOVERNMENT'S THOUGHTS WERE TAKING. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THERE HAD BEEN A DECISION NOT TO AUTHORIZE PLANTING IN APRIL. THIS WOULD ALLOW MORE TIME FOR STUDY AND CONSULTATION. IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES TAKE A POSITIVE DECISION, THE EARLIEST THAT PLANTING CAN BE DONE IS OCTOBER. AMB ESENBEL ALSO SAID THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE HAPPY TO TALK TO AMB MACOMBER OR ANYONE ELSE REGARDING SPEEDING UP PROJECTS, BUT HE DID NOT PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT THIS WOULD MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE.

6. ESENBEL POINTED OUT THAT ECEVIT FEELS THAT THE GOT WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION ON ITS OWN TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT COVERED UNDER THE ORIGINAL SCHEME -- I.E., FARMERS WHO PLANTED IN ALTERNATE YEARS, SEED CRUSHERS, ETC. HE ALSO REPORTED THE DISSATISFACTION OF THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT WITH A SYSTEM WHERE COMPENSATION FLOWS FROM THE USG TO TURKISH CITIZENS.

7. AS A FINAL POINT, ESENBEL SAID THAT HE MUST ADMIT THAT THE POPPY BAN DECISION WAS NOT POPULAR IN TURKEY.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 053188

IT WAS OPPOSED NOT ONLY BY THE PEASANTS IN THE POPPY AREA BUT ALSO BY INTELLECTUALS WHO FEEL THAT THE ERIM GOVERNMENT TOOK THE DECISION BECAUSE OF AMERICAN PRESSURE AND BECAUSE IT WAS BACKED BY THE MILITARY. ESENBEL SAID HE WOULD REPORT RUSH'S REMARKS TO ANKARA.

8. THE DEPSEC SAID THAT NARCOTICS WAS A WORLDWIDE PROBLEM, NOT J
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